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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 002688

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [PTER](#) [EG](#) [LE](#) [MO](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: DAS DANIN AND MFA DDG'S YAAR AND HADAS-HANDELSMAN
DISCUSS PEACE PROCESS, EGYPTIAN BORDER, SHALIT AND CLUSTER
MUNITIONS

REF: A. TEL AVIV 02672

[1](#)B. TEL AVIV 02640

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY. Over breakfast August 30, NEA DAS Robert Danin discussed the peace process and other regional issues with MFA DDG for International Organizations Ronny Yaar, MFA DDG for the Middle East Yacov Hadas-Handelsman, and MFA UN Political Affairs Director Rony Adam. Yaar noted the GOI's "clear preference" for Jill Sinclair of Canada as a replacement for outgoing UNSCO Michael Williams. Hadas-Handelsman asked for U.S. help getting Morocco more involved in the peace process, noting that doing so would add geographical balance to the new line up of moderate Arab states working on a way forward with Israel. Hadas-Handelsman also described GOI frustration with mounting problems on the Egyptian border, and stressed that the problems associated with the Sudanese refugees and the weapons smuggling into Gaza were both becoming untenable. He reiterated the GOI assessment that the Egyptians needed greater determination -- not more troops -- in order to control the smuggling problem. Yaar, Hadas-Handelsman and Adam also urged the U.S. to weigh in with Egypt to support reopening the stalled negotiations with Hamas over Gilad Shalit. Regarding unexploded cluster munitions in southern Lebanon, Yaar stressed that the IDF had already provided UNIFIL with all the information it had on the likely locations of unexploded ordinance. END SUMMARY.

UNSCO Candidates

[1](#)2. (C) Yaar said the GOI was not impressed with the line up of rumored candidates to replace outgoing UN Special Coordinator (UNSCO) and Quartet Envoy Michael Williams. Ticking off the list of candidates the GOI had heard mentioned, Yaar noted that all were from European countries. He said the GOI did not think another person from the European camp would be helpful, since in the GOI's view, he or she was likely bring EU politics into the Quartet process. Instead, the GOI's "clear preference" was for Jill Sinclair of Canada, even though she was not a declared candidate. DAS Danin agreed that Sinclair would make a good UN envoy. Yaar mentioned that in the meantime, Kevin Kennedy was doing a good job, and was welcome to remain as acting UNSCO for as long as necessary. "We like him very much," Yaar said, "he is cooperative, helpful, and can stay as long as he likes." Yaar also noted that the GOI had "not been fond of (Alvaro) DeSoto."

Finding a Role for Morocco

13. (C) Hadas-Handelsman made a pitch for greater Moroccan involvement in the peace process. "Morocco wants very much to be a part of the process," he said, "and we want it too." He asked if the U.S. could help get Morocco involved, either in the GCC 2 (making it GCC 3) or in the Arab League Working Group. He acknowledged Egyptian opposition to the involvement of Morocco or other moderate Arab states, but asked the U.S. to do what it could to overcome Egypt's objection. He argued that it was in the interests of Israel and the Arab moderates to include Morocco in the evolving regional process. The GOI thought Morocco could add geographical balance to the new alignment of Arab moderates that was looking for a new way forward with Israel. "If the UAE can be included, then why not Morocco?" he asked. DAS Danin agreed that Morocco represented a positive voice in the region, and agreed to consider possibilities for greater Moroccan involvement.

Sudanese Refugees and Gaza Smuggling

14. (C) Hadas-Handelsman said the GOI was increasingly concerned about the refugee and weapons smuggling problems along the Israel-Egypt-Gaza border. Regarding the issue of Sudanese refugees crossing into Israel illegally from Egypt, Hadas-Handelsman said that only about 10 percent of them were from Darfur, and thus eligible for consideration as refugees. He said there were also "a few hundred" Sudanese in Israel who had been granted refugee certificates in Egypt, but who had crossed into Israel anyway, to seek a better life. The issue was becoming a serious problem for the GOI, he said, for both humanitarian and political reasons. While the majority of Sudanese living in Israel do not meet UNHCR

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refugee standards, the GOI was in a bind because it could not return them to Sudan for fear they would be accused of treason for having gone to Israel. "We are in a Catch-22," he said, "and we can't take it anymore." He added that it was also only a "matter of time" before a terrorist infiltrates Israel disguised as a Sudanese refugee, or before a Sudanese refugee is coerced into terrorism.

15. (C) On Gaza smuggling, Hadas-Handelsman stressed that the problem was not manpower, as the Egyptians claimed, but Egypt's apparent unwillingness to effectively tackle the problem. DAS Danin agreed that a lack of will might be part of the problem, but countered that the U.S. also believed Egypt needed more forces on the border with Gaza. The 250 Egyptian soldiers available for border duty at any given time (out of the 750 garrisoned for the task) were not enough. Hadas-Handelsman responded that our understanding of the number of Egyptian troops available for border duty was incorrect. While the Egyptians were only allowed 750 troops on the border at any given time, there was no need to divide them into three shifts of 250 each. Instead, the Egyptians could have "thousands" of troops stationed just outside Zone C and rotate the full allowance of 750 up to the border for each working shift. "We're very flexible," he said, adding that the GOI was also "keeping its mouth shut" about the 650 other security forces that remain in Zone C in violation of the agreement.

16. (C) In response to DAS Danin raising the issue of possible technical solutions to the Gaza smuggling problem, Hadas-Handelsman said that GOI engineers had determined the canal idea to be unworkable. Instead, Israeli engineers were advocating a series of "water columns" that would be dug at intervals along the Egypt-Gaza border. These water-filled holes -- or "columns" -- would be about 60 meters deep and a "couple of meters" in diameter. Any tunneling in their vicinity would create a slight shift in the sand that would cause them to collapse, thus indicating the location of a new tunnel. Hadas-Handelsman said that FM Livni had briefed Omar

Suleiman on the idea during her most recent visit to Egypt, and that Suleiman had promised to send Egyptian engineers to Israel "within a week or two" for consultations on the idea. However, the Egyptians had not yet sent anyone, he said.

Reopening Negotiations over Gilad Shalit

17. (S) DAS Danin asked if reports in the Israeli press that day indicating that the GOI was interested in renewing negotiations for the release of kidnapped IDF soldier Gilad Shalit were correct. Hadas-Handelsman answered affirmatively, and said the GOI was trying to get the Egyptians to reopen the negotiations with Hamas. Adam noted that the talks have been "stalelated for four months now," and said the GOI was eager to get the process moving again. "The Egyptian channel is stuck," he said, but the GOI was trying to pry it back open. Yaar, Hadas-Handelsman and Adam all agreed that it would be very helpful if the U.S. could approach the Egyptians on the issue. "Please just ask the Egyptians to renew the negotiations," Adam said.

Cluster Munitions

18. (C) Recalling DAS Danin's discussion the day before with DG Abramovitch (reftel), Yaar said the GOI had "done its part" on the issue of unexploded cluster munitions in southern Lebanon. He said the IDF had already provided UNIFIL with the only map it had of areas likely to contain unexploded ordinance in south Lebanon. He said the IDF had also recently briefed Embassy DAO staff on the issue, and as far as the GOI was concerned, the issue was closed. (Note: Embassy DATT subsequently confirmed that an IDF briefing took place in Tel Aviv August 1, following a similar briefing by the Israeli Defense Attache Office in Washington.)

(U) DAS Danin has cleared this message.

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JONES